



Fairfield University

Office of the President

Mark R. Nemec, PhD
President

**Testimony for the
Planning & Development Committee
Mark R. Nemec, PhD
President & Professor of Politics
March 3, 2023**

On behalf of Fairfield University, I am submitting testimony on [H.B. 6804](#), AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE ASSESSMENT OF FIRE DISTRICT USER FEES ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES, and [H.B. 5868](#) AN ACT AUTHORIZING MUNICIPALITIES TO IMPOSE A TAX ON THE ENDOWMENT FUNDS OF PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

Fairfield University strongly opposes H.B. 6804, which authorizes fire districts to assess a user fee on colleges and universities located in such districts, and H.B. 5868 which seeks to authorize municipalities to impose a tax on the endowment funds of a private institution of higher education located in the municipality.

The public and independent institutions of higher education in this state are some of our state's greatest assets and they contribute a great deal to our state's economy. According to the 2023 Economic Impact Study by CCIC, the combined impact of our independent college sector on the state's economy is \$16.5 billion. Independent colleges and universities have strong partnerships with many types of businesses of all sizes. They produce one of the nation's most talented workforce, contribute to their local economies, and their students provide hundreds of hours of community service in our state's schools and non-profit agencies. Over 13,000 Fairfield University alumni live in the state, contributing significant talent across the region.

As a major contributor to our hometown and state's economy, the total annual economic impact of Fairfield University is \$987 million, according to the CCIC 2023 Economic Impact Study. Total direct spending equaled almost \$600 million.

Fairfield has risen to new heights over the course of a few short years, recognized as one of the best investments in American higher education and one of the most respected Jesuit Catholic institutions in our country. We have invested in our student's educational experience, enhancing our learning, living and research spaces. We have created greater access to students of all backgrounds, in particular having

embarked on our Bellarmine initiative which will provide a rigorous, University and philanthropy funded associate's degree-level education to promising students in underserved communities in our region. We continue to expand our graduate program offerings, including a new Executive Doctorate in Business Administration, and a number of new online-online master's degree programs in business, engineering and other high demand fields.

Tax exemption for independent colleges in Connecticut recognizes that the education we provide offers important benefits to the public as we pursue our basic missions of teaching, research and service. Such tax exemption has been universally offered and accepted throughout our country's states municipalities.

We urge legislators to oppose H.B. 6804 and H.B. 5868 which would limit the capacity of our state's strongest economic drivers from continuing to promote greater economic growth in the state of Connecticut.

We appreciate your continued support as we continue to be relevant, sustainable and powerful resource to our state's economic success.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark R. Nemec", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark R. Nemec, PhD
President
Professor of Politics